

Leader's Growth Group Homework Guide

For the week of March 4, 2018

(This guide is designed to give helpful hints in preparing & leading your group in discussion)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

FINISHING THE WINTER QUARTER

⇒ ONE MEETING LEFT IN THE QUARTER

- If you're in a new Growth Group this quarter, [watch for an email with a link](#) which will be sent to you and your group to complete a Growth Group Feedback Survey online on the day your group meets. Allow at least 10 minutes for your group to fill out their Feedback Forms on their mobile devices. Let them know how important their honest feedback is for you as leader and host.
- If you're not a new group (or you prefer the paper form) but want to get feedback from your group, you can download [a copy of the form here](#) to print at home.

⇒ **PLEASE MAKE EVERY EFFORT POSSIBLE TO FINALIZE PLANS FOR SPRING QUARTER AT YOUR MEETING THIS WEEK. CONFIRM ANY CHANGES or INDICATE "NO CHANGES" when you submit your attendance. If at all possible, please get this information to us [this week](#).**

NOTE: Due to the date of Easter this year, Spring Quarter Sign-ups will begin the same week Winter Quarter ends. So, we need info sooner than normal to plan accordingly. Thanks.

LEADER NOTES

⇒ **FOR LEADERS & HOSTS: MID-QUARTER TRAINING DATES** – Make sure you get these dates on your calendar. See the back of this homework guide for the dates for each Campus / Station-in-Life.

Discussion Reminder: Make sure you continue to balance the time you spend discussing the sermon and homework questions with the time you spend checking in with each other about life and praying for one other.

QUICK REVIEW

Looking back at your notes from this week's teaching, was there anything you heard for the first time or that caught your attention, challenged or confused you?

MY STORY

1. This weekend we heard that Jesus meets us in our doubts. We're all wired differently and some of us have a tendency to wrestle with doubt while others have little inner conflict. Which way do you tend to lean?

Good question to have everyone answer. This questions segues well to Digging Deeper #2.

2. Which three reasons to trust someone with your life caught your attention the most in this weekend's teaching and why?

Good question to have everyone answer.

DIGGING DEEPER

1. This weekend we were given some great reasons why a commitment to trust and follow Jesus is actually not a "blind leap of faith" as some may think. A similar example of a "crazy leap of blind faith" is Peter climbing out of the boat and walking on water towards Jesus (Matthew 14:22-33). To most of us this

seems like a crazy thing to do. But was Peter's faith really as blind or crazy as it seems? After each group of verses below, jot down how the insights and experiences Peter had with Jesus may have helped his "leap into the water" not seem so big or blind.

Context / Extra Study: The verses below build a case that Peter actually has good reason from past experiences to believe Jesus will take care of him as he steps onto the water. For extra study, feel free to read all the chapters before the story and jot down how this trust in Jesus began to build.

Matthew 14:22-33 – ²² Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd. ²³ After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. Later that night, he was there alone, ²⁴ and the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it.

²⁵ Shortly before dawn Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. ²⁶ When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. "It's a ghost," they said, and cried out in fear.

²⁷ But Jesus immediately said to them: "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid."

²⁸ "Lord, if it's you," Peter replied, "tell me to come to you on the water."

²⁹ "Come," he said.

Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. ³⁰ But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!"

³¹ Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?"

³² And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down. ³³ Then those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

Luke 5:1-11/Matthew 4:18-22

Luke 5:1-11 - One day as Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret, the people were crowding around him and listening to the word of God. ² He saw at the water's edge two boats, left there by the fishermen, who were washing their nets. ³ He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from shore. Then he sat down and taught the people from the boat.

⁴ When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch."

⁵ Simon answered, "Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets."

⁶ When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. ⁷ So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them, and they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink.

⁸ When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!" ⁹ For he and all his companions were

astonished at the catch of fish they had taken, ¹⁰ and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon's partners. Then Jesus said to Simon, "Don't be afraid; from now on you will fish for people." ¹¹ So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him.

Matthew 4:18-22 - ¹⁸ As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. ¹⁹ "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will send you out to fish for people." ²⁰ At once they left their nets and followed him.

²¹ Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them, ²² and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

Here Peter doubts Jesus' miraculous power, but is shown how mistaken he is as Jesus performs a miraculous catch of fish that Peter could have never imagined. Note that the impact is not just the miracle, but also calling Peter and the rest of the disciples to significant life purpose - to become fishers of men!

Additional Questions: *As followers of Jesus we're called to the same bigger purpose just as the disciples were; to reach the world for Jesus. When you hear that you're called on the same mission and bigger purpose, is that encouraging, intimidating, confusing, powerful, helpful, other? How often do you think of this purpose? Practically speaking, how do people put this into action?*

Additional Verses: *Which of these verses is most helpful to you when it comes to living out God's purpose to reach other's for Jesus.*

Acts 1:8 – *But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.*

Colossians 3:23 - *Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters,*

2 Corinthians 2:14-17 – ¹⁴ *But thanks be to God, who always leads us as captives in Christ's triumphal procession and uses us to spread the aroma of the knowledge of him everywhere. ¹⁵ For we are to God the pleasing aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. ¹⁶ To the one we are an aroma that brings death; to the other, an aroma that brings life. And who is equal to such a task? ¹⁷ Unlike so many, we do not peddle the word of God for profit. On the contrary, in Christ we speak before God with sincerity, as those sent from God.*

Matthew 8:14-16 – ¹⁴ When Jesus came into Peter's house, he saw Peter's mother-in-law lying in bed with a fever. ¹⁵ He touched her hand and the fever left her, and she got up and began to wait on him.

¹⁶ When evening came, many who were demon-possessed were brought to him, and he drove out the spirits with a word and healed all the sick. *Jesus came into Peter's home and healed his mother-in-law. Jesus' care extended now to Peter's personal family.*

Matthew 9:10-12 – ¹⁰ While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and sinners came and ate with him and his

disciples. ¹¹ When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?"

¹² On hearing this, Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick.

Jesus displays his intellect and wisdom in not getting caught in the Pharisees legalistic thinking, showing how he cares and loves all. This also reveals Jesus' character as being trustworthy to care for others.

Matthew 14:13-21 – ¹³ When Jesus heard what had happened, he withdrew by boat privately to a solitary place. Hearing of this, the crowds followed him on foot from the towns. ¹⁴ When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick.

¹⁵ As evening approached, the disciples came to him and said, "This is a remote place, and it's already getting late. Send the crowds away, so they can go to the villages and buy themselves some food."

¹⁶ Jesus replied, "They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat."

¹⁷ "We have here only five loaves of bread and two fish," they answered.

¹⁸ "Bring them here to me," he said. ¹⁹ And he directed the people to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people. ²⁰ They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. ²¹ The number of those who ate was about five thousand men, besides women and children.

Jesus gives priority to pulling away for a time of solitude, but also responds to those in need when it's not necessarily comfortable. He also performs another miracle.

Before you knew Jesus, can you think of any experiences, people, teaching/bible studies, etc. that helped you take the "leap of *not so blind faith*" to follow him?

Good question to have everyone answer, but also know answers could greatly vary. Some may have little to say if they began to follow Jesus at an early age. If that is the case, you may want to have people respond to this question and the one below at the same time.

As you follow Jesus, what helps you to continue to take the daily steps and "leaps of faith" to follow him, obey and do what he calls you to do?

2. It can be difficult to understand how faith and doubt can co-exist. How does Mark 9:14-24 help us understand that we can have both doubt and faith? *We see a man believing in God's power, but also struggling with some unbelief and yet Jesus still works.*

Mark 9:14-24 – ¹⁴When they came to the other disciples, they saw a large crowd around them and the teachers of the law arguing with them. ¹⁵As soon as all the people saw Jesus, they were overwhelmed with wonder and ran to greet him.

¹⁶“What are you arguing with them about?” he asked.

¹⁷A man in the crowd answered, “Teacher, I brought you my son, who is possessed by a spirit that has robbed him of speech. ¹⁸Whenever it seizes him, it throws him to the ground. He foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth and becomes rigid. I asked your disciples to drive out the spirit, but they could not.”

¹⁹“You unbelieving generation,” Jesus replied, “how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy to me.”

²⁰So they brought him. When the spirit saw Jesus, it immediately threw the boy into a convulsion. He fell to the ground and rolled around, foaming at the mouth.

²¹Jesus asked the boy’s father, “How long has he been like this?” “From childhood,” he answered. ²²“It has often thrown him into fire or water to kill him. But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us.”

²³“If you can’t?” said Jesus. “Everything is possible for one who believes.”

²⁴Immediately the boy’s father exclaimed, “I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!”

Species of Doubter	Description
<i>Congenital Doubters</i>	<i>Like lawyers and accountants who are trained to identify what could possibly go wrong, congenital doubters are drawn like magnets to uncertainties and questions. They may be filled with angst or have a melancholy personality. For them, faith doesn't come naturally.</i>
<i>Rebellious Doubters</i>	<i>Some doubters are rebellious, even though they may not identify themselves that way. They have the attitude, "I'm not going to let somebody run my life or do my thinking." This can take the form of an arrogant pride. Sometimes, a young person wants to rebel against his parents, and one way to do that is to rebel against the God they believe in.</i>
<i>Disappointed Doubters</i>	<i>These are the people whose doubts stem from their disappointment with God.</i>
<i>Wounded Doubters</i>	<i>These doubters have personal or family wounds. They have been personally hurt in the sense of being rejected by a mate or their business has gone south or their health has gone bad. They're wondering, "If there's a God, why does this stuff happen?"</i>
<i>Intellectual Doubters</i>	<i>These doubters continue to struggle with tough intellectual questions and doubts.</i>
<i>Seasonal Doubters</i>	<i>Seasons of life can make a big difference. Sometimes people are great believers while in college, but when they're young parents with their second baby and they're working sixty or eighty hours a week and their wife's sick all the time and the boss is on their back – they simply don't have time to reflect and grow in their faith, and then the doubts creep in.</i>

Lynn Anderson, quoted in The Case for Faith, pages 230-231.

Can you think of any explanations of what this man meant by his request to overcome unbelief?

The poor father in this account was challenged by Jesus' exhortation for faith. He did believe in Jesus' power to deliver his boy – after all, why else would he have come to Jesus? But he also recognized his doubts. So, he tearfully pleads with Jesus: Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!

"In this case, the man's unbelief was not a rebellion against or a rejection of God's promise. He did not deny God's promise; he desired it. However, it just seemed too good to be true. Thus he said, "help my unbelief!" (Guzik)

"Help my unbelief is something a man can only say by faith. "While men have no faith, they are unconscious of their unbelief; but, as soon as they get a little faith, then they begin to be conscious of the greatness of their unbelief." (Spurgeon)

We all deal with doubt at times. Have you ever found yourself asking God to help you with your doubt or unbelief? If so, explain.

Everyone may not have an answer to this.

Discussion Option: When your doubt gets you stuck: Taken from *The Case for Faith* by Lee Strobel. Doubt is fine, but it can also paralyze us and move us to “stay in the boat” and not take the small or large leaps of faith Christ calls us to every day. **Key Question - Which kind of doubt would you personally most likely experience in life and need to be aware of?**

3. We have been reminded this week that our trust in Jesus is credible, not a blind leap of faith, and that our faith can even coexist with doubt. Understanding both of these view points are foundational to navigating all that life throws at us. It builds a confidence that we can live boldly and securely following Jesus, doing all we can to help others do the same. How does James 2:14-26 reinforce that this confidence is not just an idea to hold onto but also something to act on?

James 2:14-26 – ¹⁴What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? ¹⁵Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. ¹⁶If one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? ¹⁷In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. ¹⁸But someone will say, “You have faith; I have deeds.” Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds. ¹⁹You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.

²⁰You foolish person, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? ²¹Was not our father Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? ²²You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. ²³And the scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham

believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,” and he was called God’s friend. ²⁴ You see that a person is considered righteous by what they do and not by faith alone.

²⁵ In the same way, was not even Rahab the prostitute considered righteous for what she did when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction? ²⁶ As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.

This is the scripture that tells us that faith without works is no faith at all. Though doubt is fine, if it leads us to inaction, our spiritual health becomes a concern.

Discussion Idea: *This question essentially focuses on whether or not God is calling you to take any action steps. You may want to use the sub question below as you end your group in taking prayer requests and seeing how everyone is doing.*

Additional Questions: *What would faith in action look like for you day-to-day? What does it look like when it’s not in action?*

Is there anything small or large that God is calling you to take action on that you’ve neglected or need to pay better attention to?

Not everyone will have an answer.

TAKING IT HOME

Looking back at this weekend’s teaching, is there anything specific you’d like to focus on this next week or ask your group to pray about?

Use this to take you into your prayer time.

Praise/Prayer Requests:

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RESOURCES TO TOUGH QUESTIONS ABOUT CHRISTIANITY

- Article – [7 Questions Skeptics Ask – Christianity Today](#)
- Book – [The Case For Faith](#) - Strobel
- Book – [Who Made God?](#) – Geilser/Zacharias

BIBLE AUDIO

Looking for some apps or websites that read the Bible to you? Here are a few suggestions:

Apps:

- YouVersion - [iPhone](#) / [Android](#)
- Bible.is - [iPhone](#) / [Android](#)

Online:

- Biblica - <https://www.biblica.com/bible/>
- BibleGateway - <https://www.biblegateway.com/resources/audio/>

Vista Campus

- Empty Nest: April 14, 15 & 22
- General: April 14 & 22
- Military: April 20
- Parents of Kids, K-6: April 15
- Parents of Teens: April 14, 15 & 22
- Senior Adults: Weekly Luncheons
- Singles: February 18
- Spanish Speaking: April 14
- Special Studies & Targeted: April 14, 15 & 22
- Young Marrieds & Young Families: April 14 & 15

Offsite Campuses

- Carlsbad: February 2
- Carlsbad REAL Women: February 2
- Fallbrook: TBD
- Ramona: February 4
- San Marcos/Escondido: TBD

THE EVIDENCE FOR GOD: JESUS > BLIND FAITH

Breaking Down Faith:

1 Corinthians 14:20, Colossians 1:28-29, Hebrews 11:1

- **Child-like** faith vs. **childish** faith
- Faith is a **future hope** based on **past evidence**

What Would It Take To Trust Someone With Your Life?

- Make sure they aren't **a fraud**
Romans 1:19-21; 1 Corinthians 15:19
- Demonstrate **mastery** over the **subject matter**
1 Corinthians 15:55-57
- Know them **personally**
Psalm 139
- Point to a **proven track record**
Hebrews 11
- Some kind of **money back guarantee**
Genesis 15
- Demonstrate **concern for my safety**
Ephesians 5:1-2
- Make my **expectations clear**
Romans 10:9-11

Doubting Thomas:

John 20:24-28

Jesus meets us **in our doubts** to help us **believe**